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The 1991 Every Secondary Student Survey: Initial Findings

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The 1991 Every Secondary Student Survey: Initial Findings

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This summary report is based on information collected from all Toronto secondary school students in November 1991. It documents the number of students in various demographic categories, as well as student response to questions about their school life and related activities.

Among the findings:

1. One fifth of the students are 19 or over (when all-adult programs are excluded).

2. The proportion of students whose mother tongue is not English has increased from 33% to 45% since 1987. The largest non-English student groups are the Chinese (14%), the Portuguese (7%), and the Vietnamese (5%).

3. The proportions of Black students and Asian students have increased since 1987 (from 7% to 9% and 24% to 30% respectively).

4. The proportion of students who do not live with their parents has increased from 10% to 16%. The majority of these students are living on their own, and are 19 years old and over.

5. Most students indicated satisfaction with their school in response to questions about school climate, including: equal treatment regardless of race or ethnicity; friendliness; and encouragement and support for learning.

6. Over half the students participate in extra-curricular activities.

7. On average students do ten hours of homework per week.

8. The majority of students (60%) do not have jobs. Among those who do, the average number of hours worked per week is 14.

9. Overall, about three quarters of the students aspire to post-secondary education, and over half hope to go to university.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

The Toronto Board of Education has conducted system-wide surveys of its students seven times since 1970. Some of these surveys included both elementary and secondary school students, others included secondary school students only. The surveys have emphasized demographic background variables, such as language and birthplace, as well as student program level (Basic, General and Advanced).

The most recent survey prior to 1991 was a survey of all secondary school students in 1987. (See Cheng, Tsuji, Yau & Ziegler, 1989.) In this report, comparisons between 1987 and 1991 data are included in conjunction with the new data.

This document is a first reporting of the 1991 data. It will be followed, in the 1992-93 school year, by further reports which will examine the relationships among the variables described in the document, as well as relationships among students' background, circumstances, opinions and achievement.

Data Collection Procedures

In 1991, all secondary school students[1] were asked to fill out one of two survey questionnaires: Form A or Form B. (See Appendix 1.) Both versions contain identical questions on demographic and socio-economic backgrounds of students. However, each version asks slightly different school-related questions such as homework, part-time work, extra-curricular activities and school climate. Secondary school students were randomly assigned to one or the other of the two versions.

The questionnaires had been pilot tested with eight classes of students in four high schools in three program levels during the fall of 1991. In November 1991, about 27,000 survey forms (with translations in eight major languages for ESL students) were distributed to the secondary school students. Of these, about 83% of the students (not including students from the City Adult Learning Centre)[2] returned their questionnaires. The percentages of students who filled out the two versions were 51% for Form A and 49% for Form B.

Two points need to be noted. First, missing information for individual variables is inevitable; but the missing rate as a whole is low - ranging from less than one percent for such variables as students' post-secondary school plans to 14% for parents' occupations. Second, in addition to the questionnaire responses, data from Computer Services' Student Master File were also used as a secondary source of information on students' demographics.

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1. The only exception is students from schools that do not offer credit-based programs which lead to the Ontario Secondary School Diploma. These schools include Adult Basic Education Centre, the Bickford Centre, and Jones Avenue Adult New Canadian Centre.

2. The City Adult Learning Centre is a special secondary school for adults only; the responses from its students will be summarized in a separate report for the school.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

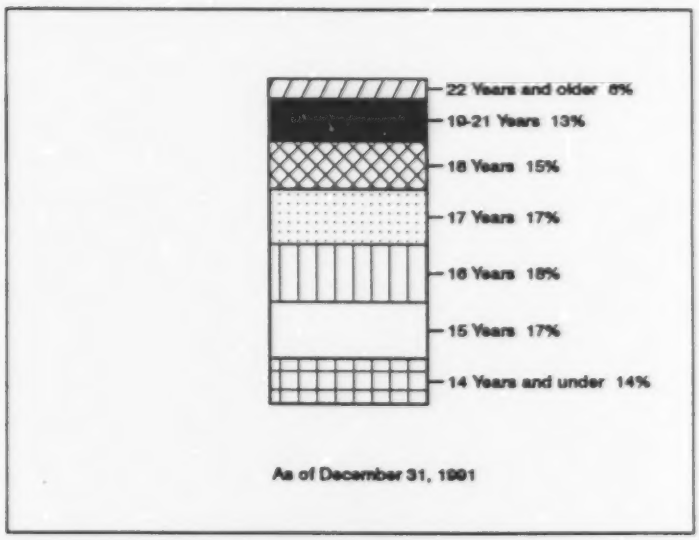
Gender

- o There are more male (53%) than female (47%) students in Toronto's secondary schools.
- o The gender distribution of Toronto's secondary schools has remained unchanged between 1987 and 1991.

Age

- o Approximately one third of Toronto secondary school students are 15 years old or younger; half are between 16 and 18 years of age; while a fifth are 19 or older.[3]

Figure 1: Age Distribution of Toronto Secondary School Students

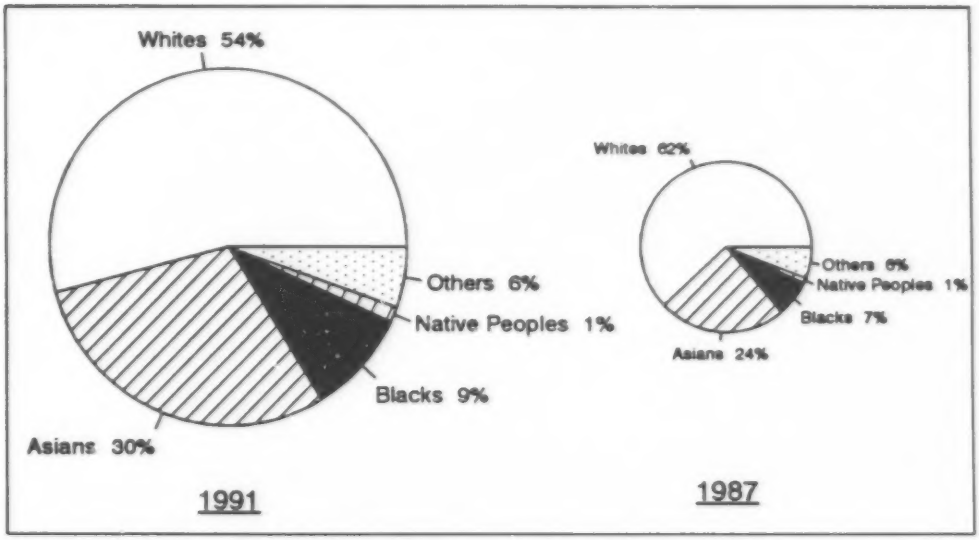


3. It should be noted that adult students from the City Adult Learning Centre were not included in the calculation.

Race

- Students in the Toronto secondary schools have quite diverse racial origins.
- Over half (54%) of the Toronto secondary school students are White.
- About one third (30%) are Asian:
  - 20% East Asian (e.g. Chinese);
  - 5% South-east Asian (e.g. Vietnamese); and
  - 4% South Asian (e.g. Indian, Pakistani).
- Almost one tenth (9%) of the students are Black.
- Native Peoples constitute one percent of the secondary school student body.
- Students of mixed races and those from Central/South America and the Middle East make up 6% of the school population.
- Trends since 1987 include a decrease in White students and an increase in Asian and Black students. The proportion of students in the Native and 'Other' categories have remained the same over the two periods.

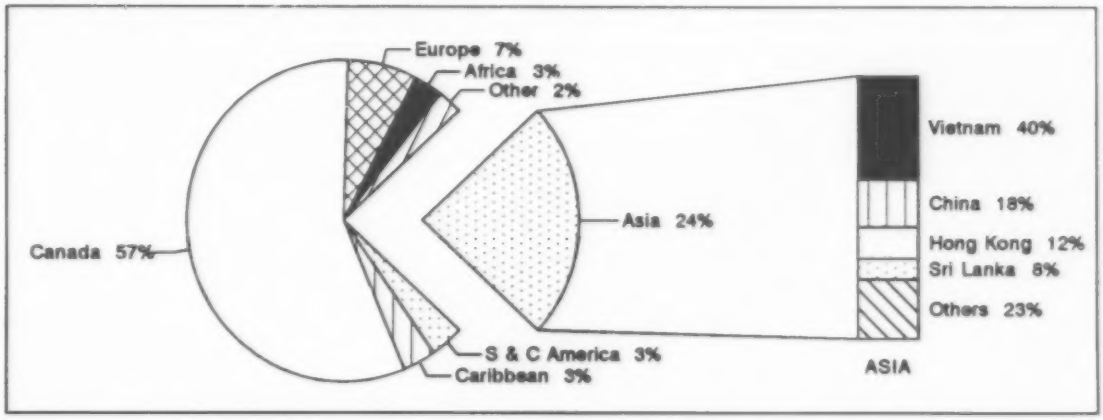
Figure 2: Racial Background of Toronto Secondary School Students



Place of Birth and Year of Arrival

- Over half (57%) of Toronto secondary school students are Canadian-born.
- Nearly a quarter (24%) were born in Asia, mainly Vietnam, China, Hong Kong, and Sri Lanka.
- The remaining were born in other regions:
  - 7% in Europe;
  - 3% in Africa;
  - 3% in South and Central America;
  - 3% in the Caribbean; and
  - 2% in other areas (1% in the Middle East, 1% in the United States and Mexico, and 0.2% in Australia).

Figure 3: Place of Birth of Toronto Secondary School Students



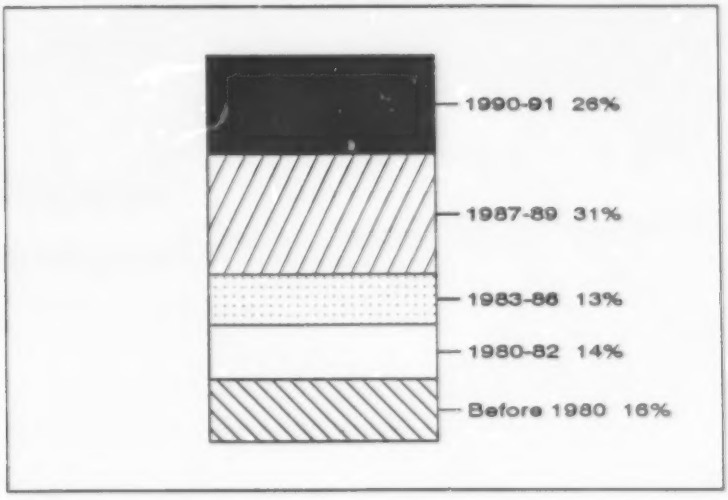
- Compared to the 1987 survey, there has been some increase in the proportions of those who were born in Asia and Africa. (See Table 1.)

Table 1: Students' Place of Birth, 1987 and 1991

	Canada	Asia	Europe	S/C America	Caribbean	Africa	Others
1987	58%	22%	8%	4%	4%	1%	3%
1991	57%	24%	7%	3%	3%	3%	2%

- The majority (57%) of foreign-born students have arrived since the beginning of 1987. This represents a quarter (25%) of the total student population in Toronto's secondary schools.

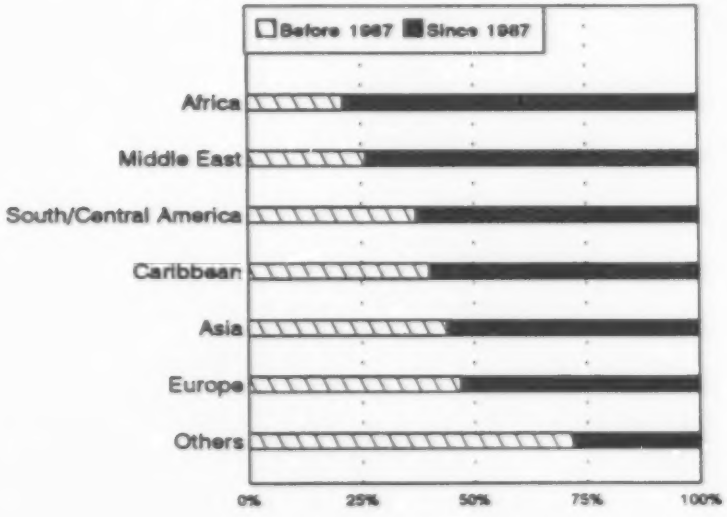
Figure 4: Year of Arrival for Foreign-born Students



- A further breakdown indicates that a high proportion of students from:
  - Africa (mainly Ethiopia and Somalia);
  - the Middle East (mainly Iran); and
  - Central America (mainly El Salvador and Nicaragua)

  have only been in this country for the last four or fewer years.

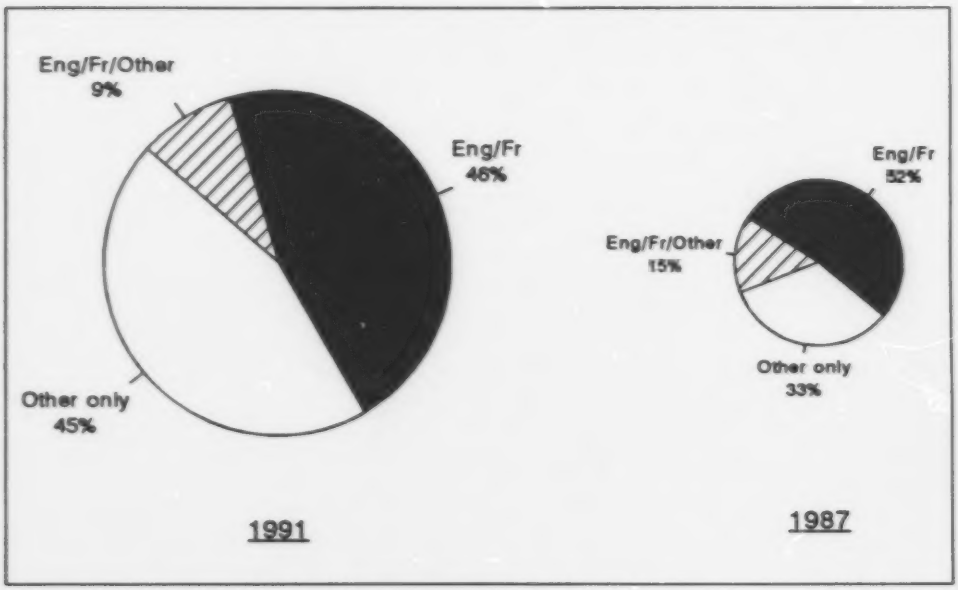
Figure 5: Year of Arrival & Place of Birth



Language

- Less than half (46%) of Toronto secondary school students learned one or both of Canada's official languages as their first language - 45% English only, and 1% French only, or both English and French.
- About one tenth (9%) of the students learned one or both official languages plus another language concurrently as a child.
- Close to half (45%) of the students are native speakers of a language other than English and French. The largest linguistic groups represented are: Chinese (14%), Portuguese (7%), Vietnamese (5%), Spanish (3%), Greek (3%), Tamil (2%), Italian (1%), Polish (1%) and Korean (1%).
- Since 1987, there has been an increase in the percentage of students whose sole first language is neither English nor French. Conversely, there has been a decrease in the percentage of the native speakers of English.

Figure 6: First Languages of Toronto Secondary School Students



- Approximately one third (36%) of the parents, compared to 46% of the students, speak English or French as their first language. On the other hand, a higher percentage of parents (57%) than students (45%) learned other languages as their mother tongue. This is true for all the major language groups as illustrated in Figure 8.

Figure 7: First Languages of Students and Parents

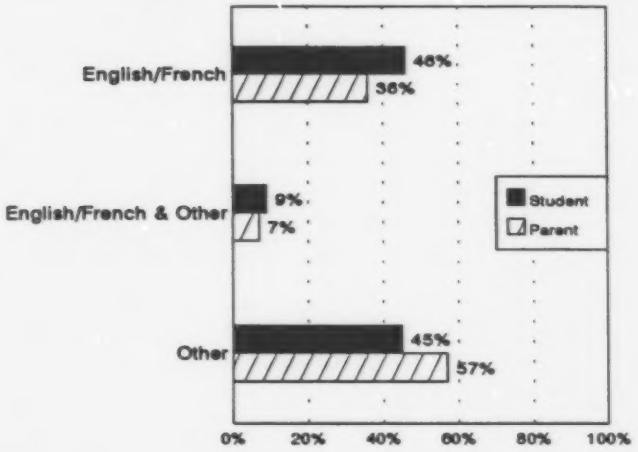
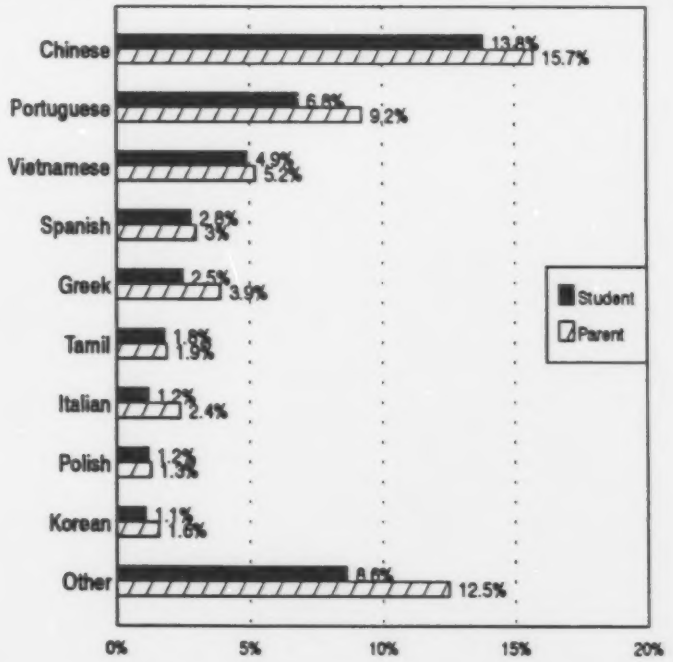


Figure 8: Students' and Parents' First Languages Other Than English/French

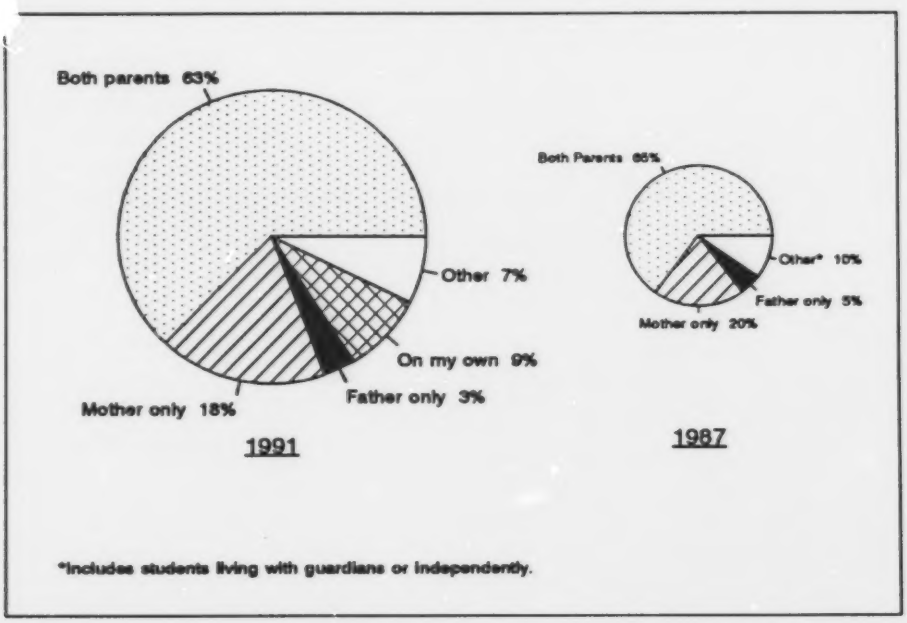


A comparison with students' ethnic identifications indicates that these parents' first languages (as shown in Figure 8) are a mirror of students' ethnic origins.

Parental Presence at Home

- Close to two thirds (63%) of Toronto secondary school students live with two parents.
- About one fifth live in lone-parent families with their mother (18%) or father (3%).
- 16% of the students do not live with their parents - with 9% living on their own, and 7% with guardians/relatives/non-relatives. Of the students living on their own, most (75%) are 19 years old and over.
- Since 1987, the percentage of students who do not live with their parents has increased from 10% to 16%, while the percentage of those living with one or two parents has dropped slightly.

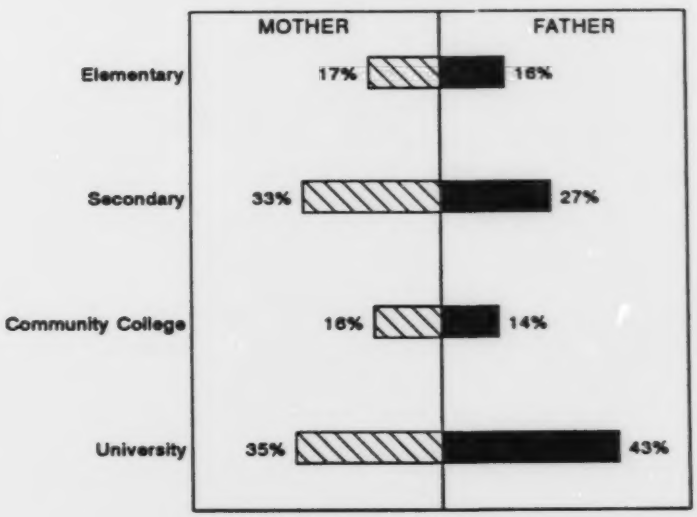
Figure 9: Parental Presence in the Homes of Toronto Secondary School Students



Parents' Educational Attainment

- About a quarter of the students indicated that they do not know their parents' educational level.
- According to students who reported their parents' educational level,[4] over half of the parents (57% of the fathers and 51% of the mothers) had post-secondary school education.
- A higher proportion of fathers (43%) than mothers (35%) had reached university as their highest level of education.
- A higher proportion of mothers (33%) than fathers (27%) had secondary school as their highest level of training.

Figure 10: Parents' Educational Attainment

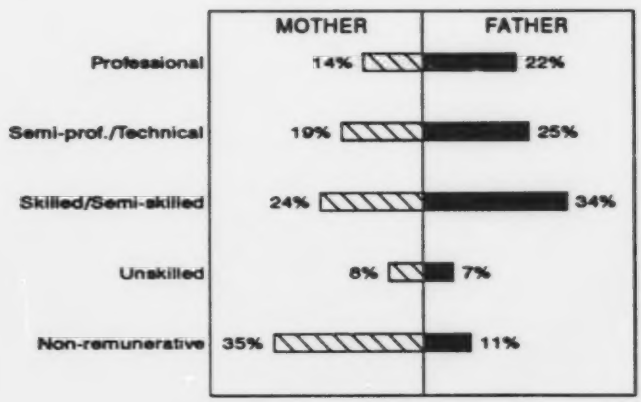


4. Parental educational attainment data presented in Figure 10 is based on students who identified their parents' education level. The distribution is quite comparable to the 1986 City of Toronto Census data for males and females 15 years old and over.

Parents' Occupations

- Among the students' mothers, about two thirds (65%) are employed:
  - 14% are in professional, and/or high-managerial fields such as school teachers, accountants and social workers;[5]
  - 19% are in semi-professional, technical, and/or middle-managerial areas such as nurses, entrepreneurs[6], and office managers;
  - 24% work in skilled and semi-skilled services areas, such as office clerks, factory workers and salespersons; and
  - 8% are unskilled labourers such as waitresses, domestic workers, and babysitters.
- Slightly over a third of the students' mothers are non-income earners, and most of these are homemakers.
- Nearly 90% of the students' fathers are employed:
  - 22% are in professional and high-managerial fields such as school teachers, engineers, and lawyers;
  - 25% are semi-professionals, technicians or middle-level managers such as entrepreneurs, office managers, and computer programmers.
  - 34% work in skilled and semi-skilled areas such as carpentry, construction, and mechanics; and
  - 7% are unskilled workers such as truck/taxi drivers, caretakers, and waiters.

Figure 11: Parents' Occupations



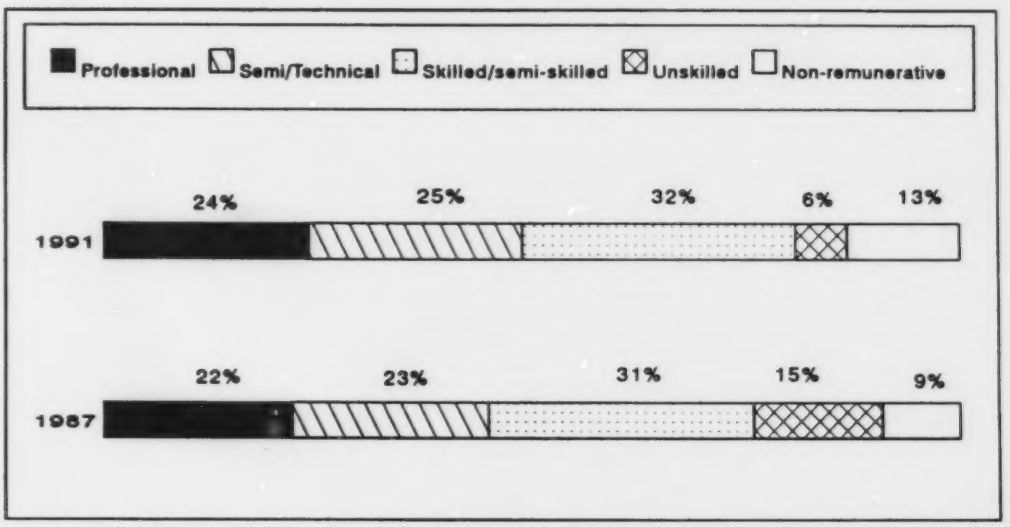
5. Parents' occupations were classified under a modified scheme of the Pineo-Porter-McRoberts scale. For details, refer to Appendix 8 of Cheng, et al. report, *The every secondary student survey, fall 1987*, Research Report 191, 1989. The examples listed in here and below were the three most frequently reported occupations in each of their respective occupation categories.

6. Some of the examples cited were businesspersons, restaurant/store/dry-clean owners, and self employed.

Family Socio-economic Status (SES)

- A comparison with the 1987 survey indicates that there have been some changes in the socio-economic pattern[7] of Toronto secondary school student population:
  - the proportion of students' families in the two higher SES categories is greater in 1991 than in 1987 (49% versus 45%);
  - the percentage of those in the lower category (unskilled labourers) has dropped from 15% in 1987 to 6% in 1991;
  - however, the percentage of those in the non-remunerative category has risen from 9% to 13% over the four-year period.

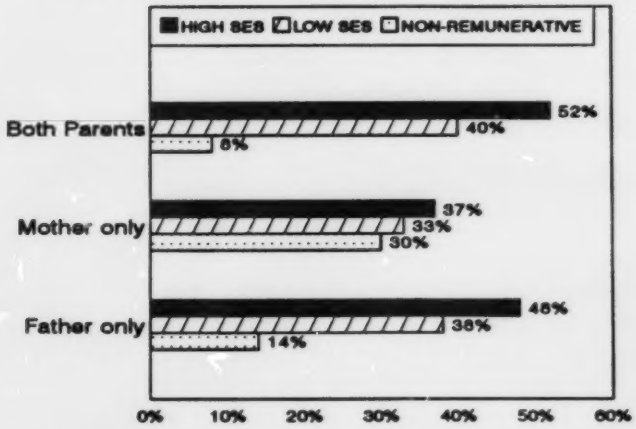
Figure 12: Family Socio-economic Status, 1987 and 1991



7. Students' socio-economic status was derived from their parents' occupations as classified by the Pineo-Porter-McRoberts scale. In the case of two-parent families, the higher SES of the two parents was considered; and in the case of single-parent families, the occupation of whichever parent the student lives with was used.

- In terms of SES, two-parent families rank higher on average than father-only families, which in turn are in higher ranking than mother-only families. Thus, when SES is collapsed into three categories - high, low, and non-remunerative:
    - 52% of two-parent families are in the higher SES category, as compared to 48% of single father families, and 37% of single mother families;
    - conversely, a much higher percentage (30%) of single mother families are in the non-remunerative category than those of single father families (14%) and two-parent families (8%).

Figure 13: Family Structure and Socio-economic Status



- A comparison with the 1987 survey reveals that the SES of two-parent families has improved while that of single-parent families has somewhat deteriorated: (See Table 2.)
    - for the two-parent families, the proportion of those in the high SES category has risen from 46% in 1987 to 52% in 1991;
    - for the mother-only families, the percentage of those in the high SES category has dropped slightly from 39% to 37% in 1991, while those in the non-remunerative category has increased from 20% to 30%;
    - for the father-only families, the percentage of those in the high SES has dropped significantly from 62% in 1987 to 48% over four years, while those in the non-remunerative category has risen from 4% to 14%.

Table 2: Family Structure and Socio-economic Status, 1987 and 1991

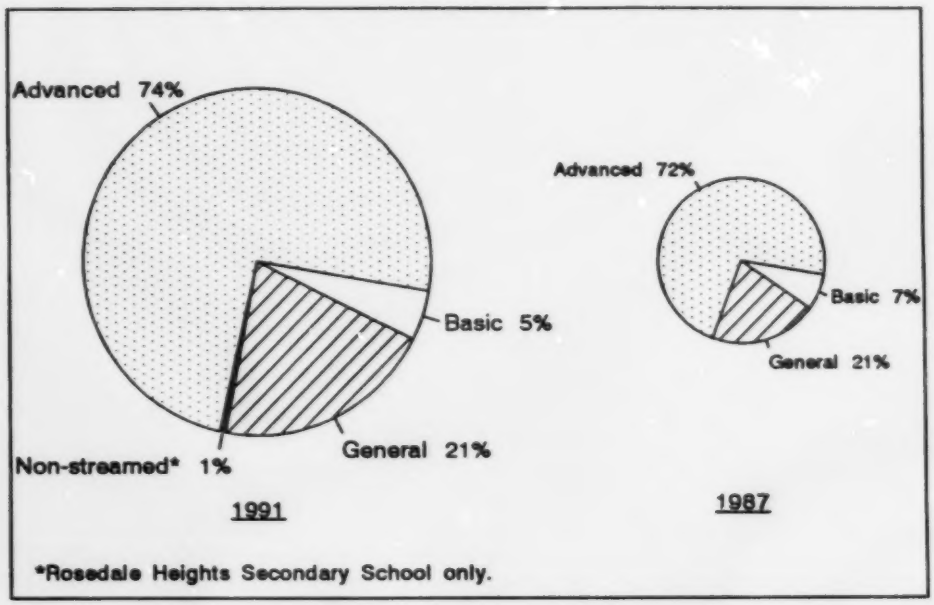
	BOTH PARENTS			MOTHER-ONLY			FATHER-ONLY		
	High SES	Low SES	Non-remu	High SES	Low SES	Non-remu	High SES	Low SES	Non-remu
1987	46%	48%	6%	39%	41%	20%	62%	34%	4%
1991	52%	40%	8%	37%	33%	30%	48%	38%	14%

CHARACTERISTICS RELATED TO SCHOOL

Level of Study

- Three quarters of Toronto secondary school students are taking most of their courses at the Advanced level, while slightly over a fifth register in General-level courses. One out of twenty students are taking most of their courses at the Basic level.

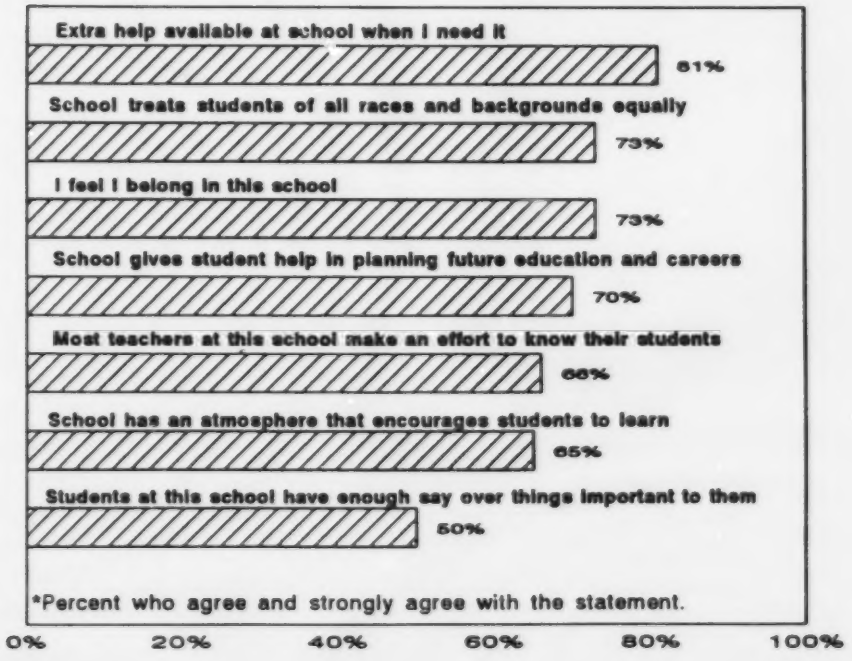
Figure 14: Level of Study of Toronto Secondary School Students



School Climate

- Approximately half the sample of students (randomly chosen) were asked to what extent they agreed with a list of seven questions on school environment:
  - Extra help is available at school when I need it.
  - This school treats students of all races and ethnic backgrounds fairly and equally.
  - I feel I "belong" in this school.
  - My school gives students the help they need for planning their future education and careers.
  - Most teachers at this school make an effort to get to know their students.
  - This school has an atmosphere that encourages students to learn.
  - Students at this school have enough say over the things that are important to them.
- Two thirds to four fifths of students agree with all of these statements, but one. Over 80% agree that extra help is available at school when they need it; only half the students agree that they have enough say over things that are important to them.

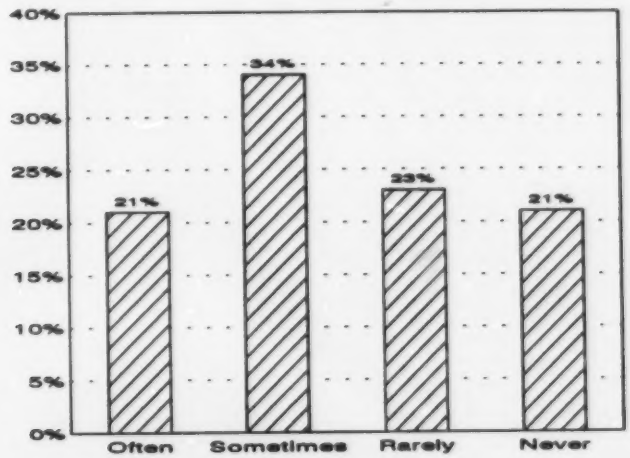
Figure 15: Students' Responses to the School Climate Questions*


Extra help available at school when I need it
81%
School treats students of all races and backgrounds equally
73%
I feel I belong in this school
73%
School gives student help in planning future education and careers
70%
Most teachers at this school make an effort to know their students
66%
School has an atmosphere that encourages students to learn
65%
Students at this school have enough say over things important to them
50%
*Percent who agree and strongly agree with the statement.
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%

Extra-curricular Activities

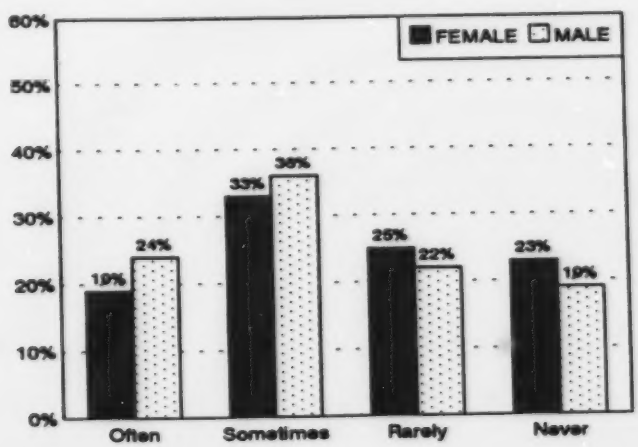
- Over half of Toronto secondary school students (56%) participate sometimes or often in school extra-curricular activites, like school sports, yearbook, or clubs.

Figure 16: Students' Participation in Extra-curricular Activities



- Male students are more likely to participate than female students (60% of male students versus 52% of female students).

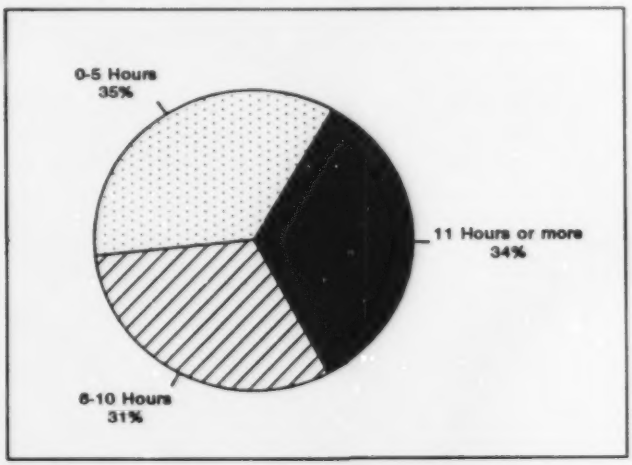
Figure 17: Students' Participation in Extra-curricular Activities - by Gender



Homework

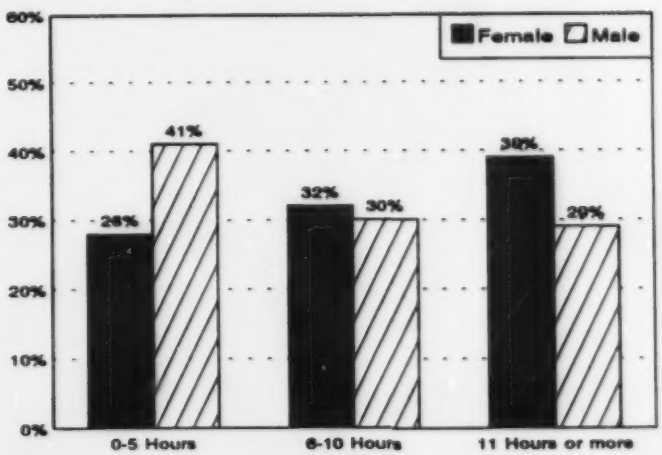
- Almost all (96%) of students say they do homework.
- About two thirds of students (65%) work on homework six or more hours per week.
- On average, students work on homework for ten hours a week.

Figure 18: Time Spent on Homework (Weekly)



- Female students work an average of 11 hours while males students work an average of 9 hours.

Figure 19: Time Spent on Homework (Weekly) - by Gender

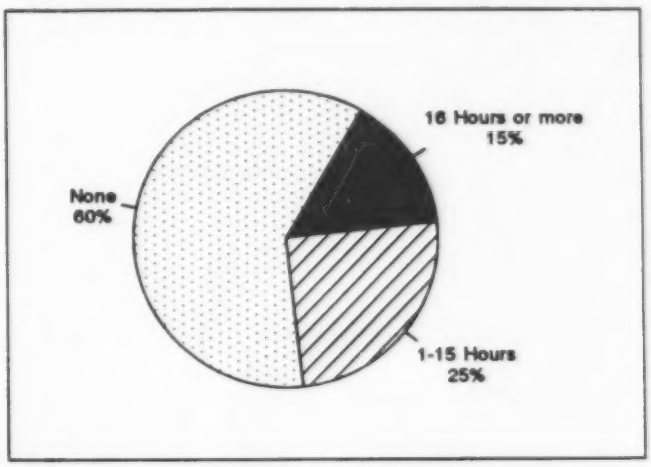


Work Status

- o 60% of students do not work, while 40% work at a job on weekdays or on weekends.[7]

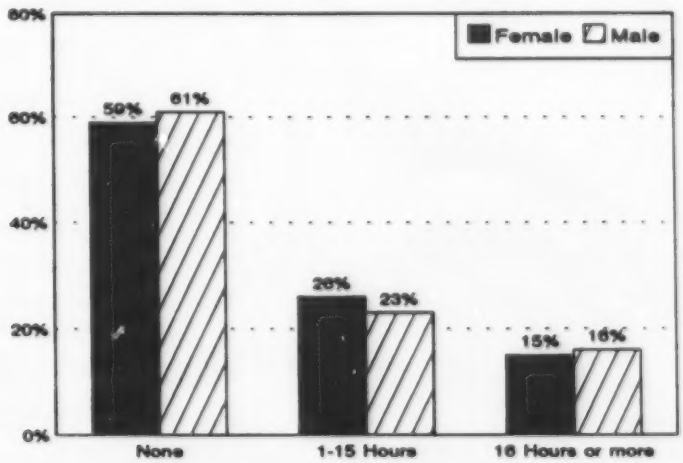
- o Those who work put in an average of 14 hours a week, although most actually work less than this (only 15% of all students work 16 or more hours a week).

Figure 20: Time Spent on Work (Weekly)



- o On average, male student workers put in an average of 15 hours a week at work, while female student workers put in an average of 14 hours.

Figure 21: Time Spent on Work (Weekly) - by Gender

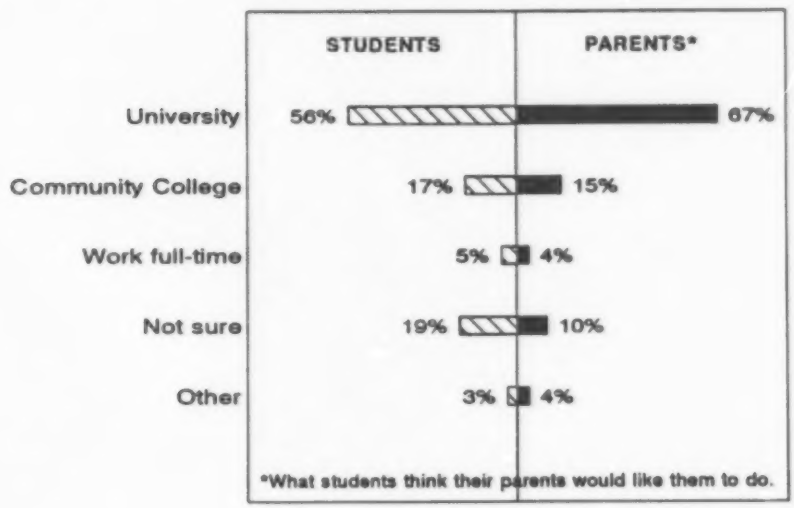


7. This did not include those who were taking a co-op program offered through their schools.

Educational Plans

- Nearly three quarters of Toronto secondary school students plan to go on to post-secondary education; a majority (56%) hope to go to university.
- Most students also think their parents want them to go on to post-secondary education. In fact, more parents than students are described as having university as a goal for the student.[8]
- A fifth of students are unsure of their plans; less than one in twenty plan to go directly into the work force.

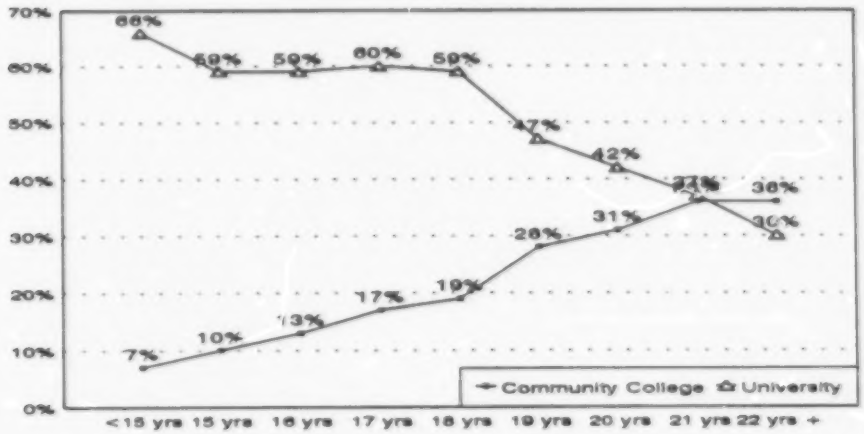
Figure 22: Post-secondary School Plans



8. Some 5% of students, or 1 in 20, say that the question on parental plans is not applicable to them.

- Students' post-secondary school plans are related to their age. Two thirds of students who are under 15 want to go to university, but by age 19 fewer than half do. Only 7% of the youngest students desire to go to community college, compared to over a quarter of 19 year olds.

Figure 23: University & Community College Plans - by Age

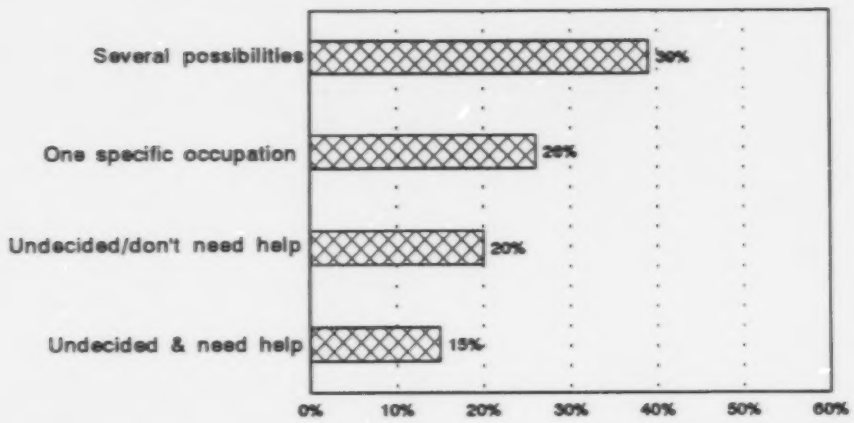


- Also, more female students than male students wish to go on to university (61% compared to 52%).

Career Plans

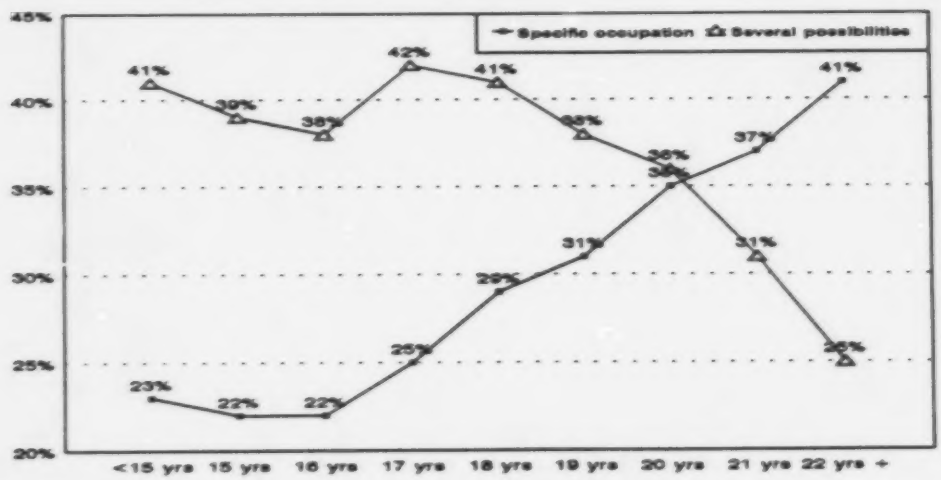
- About two thirds of students have their career plans narrowed down to several possibilities or one specific occupation; about a third are undecided.

Figure 24: Career Plans of Toronto Secondary School Students



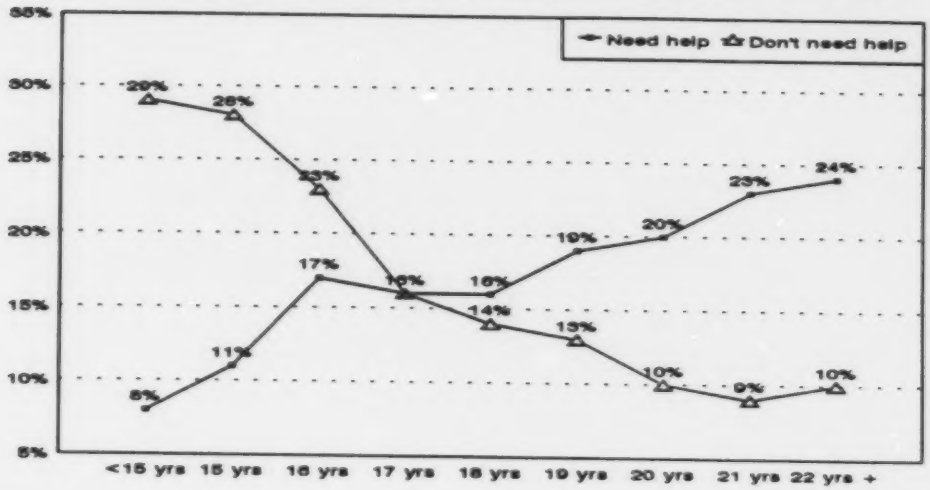
- Younger students tend to be thinking of several possibilities, while older students are more likely to have decided on one specific occupation.

Figure 25: Career Plans by Age - Those Who Have One or Several Occupations in Mind



- Most young undecided students do not think they need help in their plans; most older undecided students think they do need assistance.

Figure 26: Career Plans by Age - Those Undecided About Their Plans



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Appendix 1

Survey Questionnaires - Forms A & B

FORM A

Every Secondary Student Survey, 1991-1992
Research Services
Toronto Board of Education

In order to improve programs in Toronto schools, we need to know more about our students. This survey is confidential. No information on individual students will be shared or reported. Information on all 30,000 students is combined to get an overall picture of students and schools.

Please help us get the information to describe our students and improve our programs by answering the questions below. If any particular question causes you concern, skip it.

A. **At what level are you taking most of your courses this year?** (Circle one number only.)

1 Basic
2 General
3 Advanced
4 Non-streamed (for Rosedale Heights students only)

B. **What do you plan to do after leaving high school?** (Circle one number only.)

1 I'm not sure yet
2 To attend community college (for example: George Brown, Seneca, Centennial)
3 To go to work full-time
4 To attend university (for example: York, Guelph, Ryerson)
5 Other (describe)_____

C. **On average, how much time do you spend doing homework each week– Monday through Sunday?** (Circle one number only.)

1 About _____ hours each week.
2 None

D. **Besides going to school, do you work on weekdays– Monday through Friday?** (Do not include the job that you take for your co-op program. Circle one number only.)

1 Yes, about _____ hours between Monday and Friday.
2 No, I do not work on weekdays.

E. **Do you work on weekends– Saturday and/or Sunday?** (Circle one number only.)

1 Yes, about _____ hours Saturday and/or Sunday.
2 No, I do not work on weekends.

F. **How often do you take part in extra-curricular activities: for example sports, yearbook, clubs?** (Circle one number only.)

1 Often
2 Sometimes
3 Rarely
4 Never

G. **Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your school.** (Circle one number for each statement.)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. I feel I "belong" in this school.	1	2	3	4	5
b. This school has an atmosphere that encourages students to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
c. This school treats students of all races and ethnic backgrounds fairly and equally.	1	2	3	4	5
d. Extra help is available at school when I need it.	1	2	3	4	5
e. Students at this school have enough say over the things that are important to them.	1	2	3	4	5
f. Most teachers at this school make an effort to get to know their students.	1	2	3	4	5
g. My school gives students the help they need for planning their future education and careers.	1	2	3	4	5

(PLEASE TURN OVER)

H. **Where were you born?** (Circle one number only.)

1 Canada (If born in Canada, please go to question "J")
2 Other (specify):_____

I. **If you were not born in Canada, when did you arrive in Canada?** 19___

J. **To which of the following groups do you belong?** (Circle one number only.)

1 Aboriginal (Native people of North or South America)
2 Asian
3 Black
4 White
5 Mixed
6 Other (describe):_____

K. **Do you think of yourself as Canadian?** (Circle one number only.)

1 Yes
2 No

L. **In addition to (or instead of) Canadian, please indicate which ethnic or cultural group(s) your parents/ancestors belong to.** (Circle as many as appropriate.)

1 African
2 Arab
3 British (English, Scottish, Irish, Welsh)
4 Bulgarian
5 Caribbean
6 Chinese
7 Dutch
8 East Indian
9 Filipino
10 French
11 German
12 Greek
13 Iranian/Persian
14 Italian
15 Jewish
16 Korean
17 Native American/Metis (including North/South America)
18 Pakistani
19 Polish
20 Portuguese
21 Spanish
22 Tamil
23 Ukrainian
24 Vietnamese
25 Others (describe):_____

M. **What is (are) your first language(s)– that is, the language(s) you first learned at home?**

_____

Q. **With whom are you living?** (Circle one number only.)

1 Both father and mother
2 Mother only
3 Father only
4 Guardian(s)
5 On my own
6 Other (describe):_____

	FATHER	MOTHER
N. **What is (are) your parents' first language(s)?**	_____	_____
O. **What are your parents' occupations?** FOR EXAMPLE: carpenter, unemployed, high school teacher, housewife, restaurant owner. (Please write *what* they do, not *where* they work.)	_____	_____
P. **What are your parents' highest education levels?** (Circle one number for each parent)	1 elementary school 2 secondary school 3 community college 3 university 4 I don't know 5 Other (describe): _____	1 elementary school 2 secondary school 3 community college 3 university 4 I don't know 5 Other (describe): _____

Confidentiality: The information collected on this form will be protected under the **Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1989.**

FORM B

Every Secondary Student Survey, 1991-1992
Research Services
Toronto Board of Education

In order to improve programs in Toronto schools, we need to know more about our students. This survey is confidential. No information on individual students will be shared or reported. Information on all 30,000 students is combined to get an overall picture of students and schools.

Please help us get the information to describe our students and improve our programs by answering the questions below. If any particular question causes you concern, skip it.

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1 Basic
2 General
3 Advanced
4 Non-streamed (for Rosedale Heights students only)

B. **What do you plan to do after leaving high school?** (Circle one number only.)

1 I'm not sure yet
2 To attend community college (for example: George Brown, Seneca, Centennial)
3 To go to work full-time
4 To attend university (for example: York, Guelph, Ryerson)
5 Other (describe)_____

C. **What do you think your parent(s) would like you to do after leaving high school?** (Circle one number only.)

1 This question is not applicable to me
2 I'm not sure
3 To attend community college (for example: George Brown, Seneca, Centennial)
4 To go to work full-time
5 To attend university (for example: York, Guelph, Ryerson)
6 Other (describe)_____

D. **How certain are you of your future career plans at this time?** (Circle one number only.)

1 I have one specific occupation in mind for myself.
2 I have narrowed my plans to several possibilities.
3 I am undecided and need help.
4 I am undecided but don't need help at this time.

E. **On average, how much time do you spend doing homework each week-- Monday through Sunday?** (Circle one number only.)

1 About _____ hours each week.
2 None.

F. **Besides going to school, do you work on weekdays-- Monday through Friday?** (Do not include the job that you take for your co-op program. Circle one number only.)

1 Yes, about _____ hours between Monday and Friday.
2 No, I do not work on weekdays.

G. **Do you work on weekends-- Saturday and/or Sunday?** (Circle one number only.)

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(PLEASE TURN OVER)

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4 Bulgarian
5 Caribbean
6 Chinese
7 Dutch
8 East Indian
9 Filipino
10 French
11 German
12 Greek
13 Iranian/Persian
14 Italian
15 Jewish
16 Korean
17 Native American/Metis (including North/South America)
18 Pakistani
19 Polish
20 Portuguese
21 Spanish
22 Tamil
23 Ukrainian
24 Vietnamese
25 Others (describe):_____

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Q. **With whom are you living?** (Circle one number only.)

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6 Other (describe):_____

	FATHER	MOTHER
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O. **What are your parents' occupations?** FOR EXAMPLE: carpenter, unemployed, high school teacher, housewife, restaurant owner. (Please write *what* they do, not *where* they work.)	_____	_____
P. **What are your parents' highest education levels?** (Circle one number for each parent)	1 elementary school 2 secondary school 3 community college 3 university 4 I don't know 5 Other (describe):	1 elementary school 2 secondary school 3 community college 3 university 4 I don't know 5 Other (describe):
	_____	_____

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